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Moment of Hope, Mode of Realism: On the Dynamics of a Transnational Journalistic Field During UN Climate Change Summits

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Taking the global climate-change summits (the COP process and particularly the Copenhagen 2009 COP15 summit) as a point of departure, this article looks at the dynamics of a momentarily articulated transnational journalistic field. Based on a comparative study of summit coverage across the world, the article identifies two broad positions shared by many journalists and newspapers. On one hand, journalists took an active part in constructing and mediating a normatively based, cosmopolitan discourse that demanded a conclusive, multilateral agreement. On the other hand, journalism produced a detached and partly nationally grounded discourse of power realism. This article also looks at how these shared and rival positions opened space and opportunities for journalists to criticize and scrutinize their domestic political actors on the issue of climate change. Finally, the study argues that despite its cosmopolitan moments and reflexivity, journalism was part of a potential change of tone in climate-change coverage in which the plausibility of a multilateral agreement and the legitimacy of transnational organizations (such as the UN) may have been seriously undermined, at least in the short run.

Climate change breaks down many of our constructed boundaries. It crosses borders and blurs facts with opinions, experts with laymen, and development aid with business opportunities. It recharges old concepts, challenges institutional arrangements, and calls for new ideas and solutions.

Conceptually, climate change can initiate the reconsideration of fundamental theoretical distinctions, such as nature/culture, global/local, and future/present (e.g., Hulme, 2010; Jasanoff, 2010). Disputes about climate change are marked by changing global orders, demonstrating both the postcolonial, increasingly multipolar, globalized world and the persistence of national interests in

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international bargaining. In media and journalism studies, climate change opens new insights into old questions, reshaping journalist–source relations (e.g., Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Boykoff, 2011; Carvalho, 2005), audience reception (e.g., Berglez, Hoyer, & Olausson, 2009), and issues of public opinion (e.g., Höppner, 2010). As it articulates the debate about the value of global commons—clean air, forests, fresh water, oceans—the increasingly depleted and privatized shared resources of humankind (Shiva, 1988), climate change carries a powerful potential for building global journalism (e.g., Berglez, 2008) or publics (e.g., Beck, 2010). One can guess—and perhaps also hope—that we are only at the beginning of opening up such questions in communication research and social theory.

Practically and politically, climate change can radically re-situate social actors. As a global problem, it energizes transnational NGOs and civic networks (e.g., Castells, 2009, pp. 303–339; Parks & Roberts, 2010) and reframes economic calculations (e.g., Stern, 2006). As a perfect example of a "postnormal" scientific problem (high risks and high uncertainty combined with urgent need for decisions), it draws experts into new kinds of relationships with politicians and decision makers (Funtowicz & Ravez, 1993; Hulme, 2009b, pp. 77–82; see also Beck, 2010, p. 81ff). With its obvious links to the lifestyle of the carbon-driven and mobile (post-)modernity (Urry, 2011), it begs us all—as consumers and citizens—to rethink our lives and practical choices.

Contested though it may be—and partly because of that—climate change has emerged as an essential discursive element of the global environment in which people, institutions, and nations act. To stretch the concept just a bit, "climate change" is a potentially new (and a new kind of) member in the family of late "modern social imaginaries" (Taylor, 2004). To be sure, it does not enjoy the same naturalized status as some of the older modern imaginaries (sovereign people, public sphere, objectified [second nature] of economy, etc.), but it meets the key qualifications (ibid., p. 23 ff). It frames the way ordinary people "imagine their surroundings." Just think about our everyday interpretations of the weather. They are communicated by "images, stories, and legends" rather than by theoretical terms. Consider the spectacles of melting ice, predictions of drowning islands, stranded polar bears, "hockey-stick graphs" of rising temperature, or satellite images of hurricanes. Such stories and images are part of our shared understanding of the world, making common practices possible and enhancing their sense of legitimacy (or illegitimacy, for that matter). Think of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) and its Conferences of Participants (COPs) since 1995. There are vast differences in what people think about climate change and its practical implications, yet "climate" is a central part of our shared language of thought, for individuals, institutions, and nations. As a global "imaginary," it has already given rise to new transnational common practices and institutions, not least in the media, where the "*performative* deployment of spectacular images" has "brought home the threat and reality of global climate change . . . as possibly 'the' global crisis of the age" (Cottle, 2009, p. 509, emphasis added).

Climate change offers both an exceptional challenge and an opportunity to study the dynamics of communication in a globalized world. In this article we hope to contribute to this task by drawing on ongoing, transnational research projects focusing on the journalistic coverage of the COP process and particularly the annual global climate-change summits. The summits have become an intensive (and exceptional) example of a global mediatized political event where an enormous amount of knowledge

production, economic lobbying, civic activism, and bargaining gravitate around potentially consequential political decision making. The summits force different kinds of actors and forms of knowledge into a compressed time–space, providing an opportunity for researching climate-change politics and claims of social and political theory in general—and climate journalism in particular.

Transnational Fields and Climate Journalism

A growing body of literature on the relationship between journalism and globalization has taken up the question of "transnational" or "global" journalism in recent years (cf. Berglez, 2008; Cottle, 2009; Eide, Kunelius, & Phillips, 2008; Hafez, 2007; Löffelholz & Weaver, 2008; McNair, 2006; Reese, 2001, 2008, 2009), sometimes suggesting that global journalism is a myth, sometimes suggesting that journalism can be a key agent for global dialogue. The UN climate summits are an example of momentary "transnational arenas" in which the dynamics of "global journalism" can be studied concretely (cf. Reese, 2007). They offer an empirical opportunity to develop a more detailed understanding in which journalism is neither reduced to nations nor idealized for nonexistent global virtues.

Theoretically, this article aims to develop a more useful vocabulary for such an analysis by proposing an extension of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1990, 1998). In the case of climate-summit journalism, three interrelated aspects of field theory are particularly relevant.

First, the climate summits offer a momentary representation of a transnational *field of climate politics.* In this field, political actors are largely conditioned by capital defined in other fields (economic power, technological know-how, positions and alliance structures in international organizations, possession of resources [such as coal and oil], etc.). But as momentarily intensified articulations of the field of climate politics, the summits can be completely reduced to other fields or power factors/hierarchies. As the somewhat unpredictable and fuzzy final days of the summits show (from Bali to Copenhagen and Durban), the global, ethical, moral, scientific, and other factors incorporated into the contested imagery of "climate change" may temporarily nudge the field of "climate politics" in autonomous directions, producing capital and relations typical of that particular field. From the perspective of the field of climate politics, journalists and media are (political) participants in the field, and—just to offer an example—Fox News (US) has a somewhat different position than the *Guardian* (UK) has.

Second, in the summit coverage we can catch a glimpse of a multidimensional, transnational *field of journalism.* It partly relies and draws on the transnational field of climate politics, but is also built on other dependencies. These include media technology, or emerging economics of transnational audiences, as well as some formally shared values, rules and practices that journalists adhere to as "professional." Momentarily, the values of such a transnational journalistic field can link up powerfully with the field of climate politics. For instance, the professional value "reporting the facts" and the general modern respect for scientific knowledge (IPCC, for instance) were surely factors that persuaded mainstream journalism in many countries to more widely accept the reality of anthropogenic climate change. But sometimes widely shared journalistic values may also cause turbulence in the dominant order of the field of climate politics. Thus, for instance, the value of "exposures" (from tabloid media's scandal hunger, to the highly esteemed

investigative reporting of the quality press) was undoubtedly a factor in the "Climategate" controversy shortly before the Copenhagen summit, enabling various actors to harness journalism for political purposes.

Third, it is important to emphasize that throughout climate summits, both of these fields are transnational—that is, the summit actors are (always) situated simultaneously in local and global contexts. This is indeed the key quality of a transnational field: that the capital with which agents act is drawn from and reproduced in the "global" dimension of the field (e.g., NGOs, science, global professional references for journalists), but at the same time, it relies on (and has to reproduce itself) in the "local" dimension (e.g., journalists linked to their national audiences, politicians to their national frameworks). Studies from other national institutions and fields of the way national journalism tends to "domesticate" international issues have provided ample evidence of the fragile autonomy of professional journalism.

What makes the summit context worth studying, then, is how the intense and multidimensional transnational context complicates the role of journalists. Our aim is neither to prove nor deny the existence of an abstract "global public sphere," nor are we talking about merely "cosmopolitan elite policy networks" (Davis, 2010, pp. 110–126). Instead, we wish to look at—and look for—the *transnational* field of climate journalism.

Materials and Methods: Project Background

This article is based on the work accomplished during a large transnational research project[1] focusing on newspaper reports of COP13 (Bali, 2007) and, more particularly, COP15 (Copenhagen, 2009) in two mainstream newspapers in several countries (Bali, 13 countries; Copenhagen, 19). The monitored countries are situated in diverse political, cultural, technological, economic, and, indeed, climatic conditions. They include the major global powers and carbon emitters (United States, China); emerging players in both global economy and climate politics (Brazil, Russia, South Africa); countries that are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan); and countries better situated and prepared to adapt (Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark). Some countries are economically dependent on carbon export (Australia, Canada, and Norway), while others are carbon importers. (For a full list of countries, see Table 1.)

[1] MediaClimate (2007–) is a transnational group of researchers currently representing 18 countries from all continents, whose main focus is to analyze the press coverage of the climate summits (the COPs) and to try to develop new theories on global journalism based on these studies (Eide et al., 2010).

Table 1. Newspaper selection and the number of stories during the research period of the Copenhagen summit (2009). (Figures in brackets for the Bali summit [2007] when available.)

Country			Paper 1 ("elite")			Paper 2 ("life-world")		
Denmark	710	22%	B.T.	290	41%	Jyllands-Posten	420	59%
Bangladesh	317	10%	The Daily Star	160 (30)	50%	The Prothom Alo	157 (22)	50%
Norway	264	8%	Aftenposten	131 (73)	50%	Verdens Gang	133 (48)	50%
Canada	262	8%	The Globe and Mail	130 (43)	50%	The Toronto Star	132 (48)	50%
Australia	247	8%	Sydney Morning Herald	168	68%	The Daily Telegraph	79	32%
Finland	216	7%	Helsingin Sanomat	168 (69)	78%	Ilta-Sanomat	48 (24)	22%
Brazil	171	5%	O Estado de São Paulo	143	84%	Agora	28	16%
Sweden	158	5%	Dagens Nyheter	113 (51)	72%	Aftonbladet	45 (22)	28%
China	116	4%	Xinhua Daily Telegraph	71 (70)	6%	Global Times	45 (10)	39%
Germany	114	4%	Sueddeutsche Zeitung	79 (45)	69 %	BILD Zeitung	35 (11)	31%
USA	102	3%	The New York Times	77 (13)	75%	USA Today	25 (2)	25%
Indonesia	95	3%	Kompas	78 (119)	82%	Warta Kota	17	18%
Israel	85	3%	Ha'aretz	52 (23)	61%	Yedioth Aharonoth	33 (7)	39%
South Africa	84	3%	Business Day	77	92%	The Daily Sun	7	8%
Egypt	76	2%	Al-ahram	50	66%	Al-Masry Al-Youm	26	34%
Pakistan	58	2%	The Dawn	40	69%	The News	18	31%
El Salvador	55	2%	El Diario de Hoy	30 (18)	55%	La Prensa Gráfica	25 (57)	45%
Chile	48	1%	La Tercera	39	81%	Las últimas noticias	9	19%
Russia	32	1%	Kommersant	19 (6)	59%	Moskovsky Komsomolets	13 (7)	41%
Total	3210	100%	Total	1915	60%	Total	1295	40%

It is practically impossible to find "functionally equivalent" news media, let alone cover the same dimensions, in all countries. The decision to gather data from two different newspapers in each country assumes that newspaper coverage gives us a relevant insight into climate-change discourses in different national journalistic fields and enables broad global comparisons (albeit not assuming that the "nation" is always the deciding factor). [2] The basic sample consists of all stories in these newspapers that mentioned

[2] We tried to look at newspapers that articulate different kinds of relationships with their respective audiences. One chosen newspaper in each country has a rather close relationship with the local power-elite. Depending on the contexts, this "closeness" may either mean a clear cooperative relationship with

either "Bali" or "climate"[3] or "Copenhagen" or "climate" during the comparatively same periods, December 1–22, 2007 and 2009, from some days before the summit was in session until the first interpretations of each summit's achievements. A content analysis mapped the general contours of the coverage (story salience, use of photos, genres, and voices accessed in the stories). The coverage in each country was also analyzed qualitatively (for details, see Eide, Kunelius, & Kumpu [Eds.], 2010).

Here we focus on the *transnational* dynamics of the coverage in three ways: (1) We present some evidence of a transnationally shared, normative, and cosmopolitan position of "hope" articulated in journalism; (2) we identify a parallel and eventually dominant transnational position of "realism" in the coverage; and (3) we discuss the complexity of journalistic "domestication" (and the dynamics of realism and hope inside it) of the summits.

Advocacy of Hope, or the "Cosmopolitan Moment" of Climate Journalism

In the (post-)industrialized West, climate change had made a breakthrough onto the journalistic agenda well before Copenhagen. The volume of coverage increased substantially during the early 2000s, helped by some extreme weather conditions in the Northern hemisphere, the Nobel Prize awarded to the IPCC and Al Gore in 2007, and the release of the IPCC fourth evaluation report in 2007 (cf. Hulme, 2009a; Cottle, 2010; Urry, 2011). This media attention curve was relatively global.)[4] Apace with rising public interest, media-research focus on climate-change reporting increased, leading to important media critique, claiming, for instance, that journalism had helped—through professional "balance as bias" (cf. Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004)—to keep the issue unsettled far too long. The relationship between media and climate science became explicitly politicized (e.g., Boykoff, 2007; Carvalho, 2005; Sluijs, Est, & Riphagen, 2010).

We cannot prove that such academic criticism (or its popular and political variations) had an effect on professional journalism. However, the growing IPCC consensus (IPCC, 2007) leading up to

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the state (e.g., in Egypt and China) or refer to an explicitly aggressive culture of professional journalistic autonomy (i.e., a more visible "journalistic field," such as in the United States and Germany). Either way, the newspaper is closely connected to the elite (power-system actors, the order of the political field). The other newspaper was chosen as an alternative to this elite emphasis, often meaning a paper more geared toward a "life-world" perspective. In many countries this means a more "tabloid" paper or a consumer-driven outlet of journalism (e.g., in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, United States, South Africa, Brazil, Chile). In some cases, the "life-world" perspective is much less clear, but in some way a commercial or linguistic distance from the elite paper was aimed at (e.g., in Israel, Egypt, Bangladesh). These distinctions are clearly too abstract to allow comparisons between "elite" and "popular" across the materials, thus the "elite (or system focus)" vs. "life-world" distinction serves only as an attempt to capture at least some of the diversity of mainstream journalism in each country.

[3] "Bali" or "Copenhagen" stories that had no connection to the summit or climate (e.g., pure tourism stories), contained other news (for example, from Bali), or used the word "climate" in a completely unrelated way (e.g., talking about the "political climate") were excluded.

[4] See the ongoing monitoring on climate change coverage by Boykoff and Mansfield : http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/media_coverage/

Copenhagen and tensions around it were an obvious contextual factor for journalism. A prominent and legitimate strand in the debate tension saw that "science is settled" well enough—at least to adhere to the precautionary principle (see UNFCC, art. 3.3).[5] Many journalists deemed it legitimate to publicly pressure politicians toward a multilateral, binding political agreement at Copenhagen. This normative narrative of expectations is clearly present in our material from Bali toward Copenhagen. It constructed one legitimate transnational position for journalists in the global climate-change debate. Several pieces of evidence testify for this "advocacy of hope" position among journalists in the Copenhagen coverage.

The volume of coverage in itself can be seen as indirect evidence of journalistic pressure toward a multilateral deal. In all the countries we looked at (with the obvious exception of Indonesia[6]), coverage increased from Bali to Copenhagen. Figure 1 presents an example of this increase in the elite press, but the same holds true for the popular press. Some increases have partly local explanations (proximity of Copenhagen to Nordic newsrooms, the momentary hope regarding Barack Obama's climate politics in the United States). Nevertheless, the overall trend is clear. It testifies to the increasing willingness of newsrooms to focus attention on the COP process.

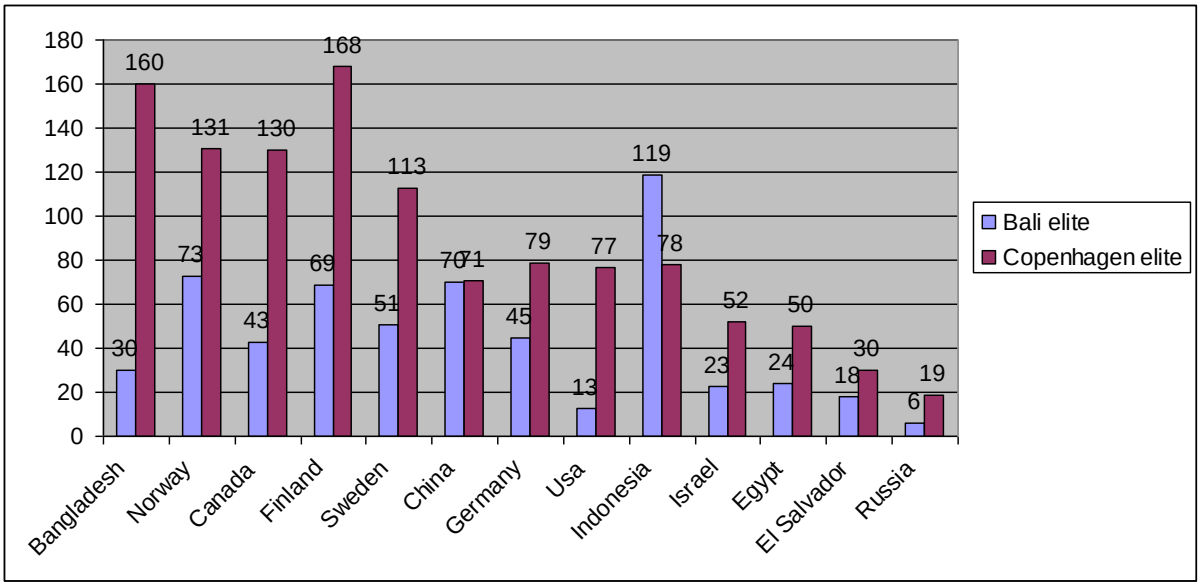

Figure 1. Comparison of elite-paper coverage (volume, number of stories) from Bali to Copenhagen in 13 countries.

[5] The UNFCCC in its Article 3.3 recognizes the importance of the precautionary principle: "The Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of CC and mitigate its adverse effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, *lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures*" (emphasis added).

[6] The host country of the Bali conference, of course, was not able to meet the volume of its home conference during the Copenhagen summit.

Explicit commentary materials by journalists often represented the summit through a "global civil society" frame. This rhetoric was built on a distinction between politicians gathered in Copenhagen and the "world" expecting them to come to a reasonable conclusion. Particularly at the start of the Copenhagen summit, journalists expressed a strong sense of hope, often dramatized with an alarmist vocabulary. The most visible and striking sign of this was the shared editorial, initiated by the *Guardian* and published in 56 newspapers in 46 countries around the world:

> Unless we combine to take decisive action, climate change will ravage our planet, and with it our prosperity and security. The dangers have been becoming apparent for a generation. Now the facts have started to speak: 11 of the past 14 years have been the warmest on record, the Arctic ice-cap is melting and last year's inflamed oil and food prices provide a foretaste of future havoc. In scientific journals the question is no longer whether humans are to blame, but how little time we have got left to limit the damage. Yet so far the world's response has been feeble and half-hearted. (Katz, December 6, 2009)[7]

The same kind of vocabulary was often used by staff writers elsewhere, across very different contexts. Here are some headlines from around the world:

> *We can afford a carbon cut, we just need the will* (opinion, *Toronto Mail*, Canada, December 12, 2009).
>
> *Will Copenhagen be Hopenhagen?* (opinion, *Dawn,* Pakistan, December 8, 2009).
>
> *A Debate for Life* (editorial, *La Tercera,* Chile, December 6, 2009).
>
> *Disappointment and Hope in Copenhagen* (*Aftenposten,* Norway, December 7, 2009).
>
> *Last hope [rests] in the informal discussion: Bangladesh is still optimistic* (*Prothom Alo,* Bangladesh, December 18, 2009).

At the end of the summit, this shared perspective of hope mostly turned into a language of disappointment. "Collapse," "failure," and "fiasco" were common ways of describing the final outcome. If hope during the summit was evoked by diversely situated national media, the disappointment was greatest among those who were not part of the final brokering for the "Accord."

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[7] See also http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/gallery/2009/dec/07/copenhagen-climate-change-newspapers#/?picture=356504692&index=9. In the *Guardian* alone, the editorial generated more than 1,000 responses before the debate was closed after 60 hours (see Eide & Ytterstad, 2011).

A key element of the rhetoric of hope was the willingness of journalism to talk on behalf of the victims by highlighting the most vulnerable countries (what may be named "moment victim heroes"). Interventions at the summits by leaders of Papua New Guinea (Bali) and Tuvalu (Copenhagen) and interviews with representatives from these and other vulnerable nations spread widely in media across the world. The visual publicity stunts of cabinet meetings under water (Maldives) or high among retreating glaciers (Nepal) traveled successfully and globally, suggesting that newsrooms chose not to mind their obvious character as "pseudo-events" (Boorstin, 1971). In the feature-story genre, too, journalism demonstrated its emphatic, transnational potential by highlighting the plight of grassroots people who try to survive the changes undermining their livelihoods (Eide & Ytterstad, 2010; Roosvall, 2010).

Advocacy of hope was also articulated in some nontraditional news-gathering practices, which linked journalists to climate activists. For instance, in numerous ways *The New York Times* web coverage crossed the traditional lines between sources and journalists, indicating new kinds of collaborative relationships (Russell, 2010). An "alliance" between civic activism and journalists was also discernible elsewhere. Although the popular press sometimes featured civic activism and demonstrations in Copenhagen through a "law and order" frame, our sample includes numerous examples of very activism-friendly journalism from Finland to Pakistan and from Egypt to the United States. This suggests that climate change as an issue enabled journalists to abandon or renegotiate some of their usual reflexes and routines. Civil-society actors not only got a lot of overall attention (see Figure 2; for national differences in the role of civil-society actors, see Figure 3, below), but also received rather favorable coverage as the agents of hope.

> The thousands of non-governmental organizations, which are normally central to international climate conferences, found themselves locked out. . . . The environmental groups here played the roles of both advocate and expert, given that they follow the focal issues year after year. They are observers—and entertainers, organizing colorful and startling protests. And they provide logistical support and translation for people in some of the poorest countries, who often lack the resources to relay their message on their own. (*The New York Times*, December 19, 2009)

> The three articulate and well-informed young people from Pakistan have been busy for the past week, attending climate change side events and rallies in which youth from all over the world have participated. Youth from all the participating countries have been invited to Copenhagen so their voices can be heard. After all, it is their future that is being discussed here. (*The Dawn*, Pakistan, December 13, 2009)

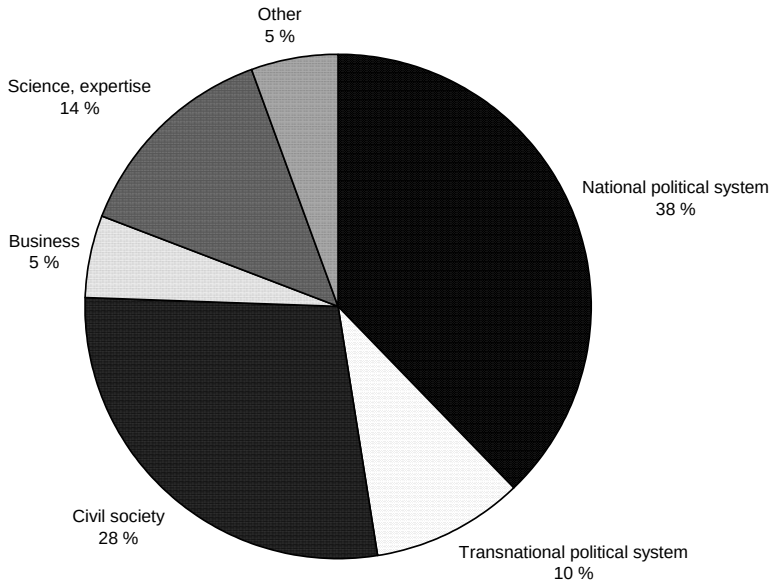

Figure 2. Distribution of actors quoted in all coverage (voices) (N=5522)[8]

Figure 2 shows the relatively minor role scientists played in the Copenhagen coverage, despite an unprecedented number of scientists present and an abundance of information published on the spot (see also Painter, 2010). References to scientists often appeared in journalistic (staff) comments, op-ed pieces, or letters to the editor, rather than in the hard news reporting where the ongoing heavyweight political bargaining went on. For example, out of 3,210 stories (here excluding Denmark, for technical reasons), scientists and representatives of national political systems appeared in the same story only 189 times. This implies that scientists were not actively included (by journalism) in the political bargaining. Also, despite its obvious instant news value (as a conflict, exposure, and another "gate"), the "Climategate" affair was mostly kept off the actual Copenhagen news agenda. Journalists indeed referred to it, but mostly only to deny its relevance to the summit. There are doubtless various explanations for the role of

[8] A "voice" in the project coding scheme refers to a *person* who is quoted directly or to whom indirect quotations are attributed to. This offers only a rough take on the true voices that are interwoven in journalistic texts, and the choice does not quite do justice to different journalistic traditions. But in order to provide reasonably reliable, basic comparative data, this compromise was agreed upon.

science in the coverage.[9] But as part of the "hope" discourse of Copenhagen, it makes sense to suggest that journalists worked against politicizing science. Keeping the science "settled" and unified helped to increase the public pressure for an inclusive, multilateral deal. It also fit well as the backcloth for the normative claim of concern over a shared world—although it was the (global) civic actors and NGOs, and not scientists, that animated this concern in the coverage. It is also important to note that there were noteworthy exceptions, most obviously in countries where the issue of climate change has been heavily loaded domestically, such as Australia (cf. Chubb & Bacon, 2010), or where there is stronger explicit dependency between the political and scientific fields, as in China and Russia (cf. Xu, 2010; Yagodin, 2010).

Summing up, climate summit coverage showed signs of transnational articulation of climate-specific values by journalism. These values emerged as they questioned or redefined the traditional "neutral" or "detached" professional attitudes. This occurred in part by globalizing and redefining earlier democratic imaginaries, as in the case of juxtaposing the "world" (the global people) and the politicians. Examples of these climate-specific values include an empathic stance toward some sources or even collaborating across the journalist–source divide. Clearly, these renegotiations of narrow professionalism were informed by a sense of urgency concerning the climate issue itself. Thus, the transnational "advocacy of hope" in the journalistic field relied on an overlap with the field of transnational climate politics and made way for an active role for the journalist as an "educator") or at times an advocate. A strong narrative support for this journalistic position was created by the structure and process of the Kyoto protocol and COP series itself: the Copenhagen summit framed itself strongly with the ideas that "time is running out" and this is a "decisive moment."[10] Also, the concrete presence of world leaders provided a rare, momentary link between a "global public sphere" and real political power: within the hope narrative about Copenhagen, both legitimation and efficacy seemed to be present (cf. Fraser, 2007). Journalists clearly recognized this and contributed to the construction of this "cosmopolitan moment."

Journalism of Global Power Politics, or the Mode of Realism

Parallel to the discourse of hope and global *climate* journalism, the Copenhagen coverage is also an example of global *summit* journalism. Consequently, one can also detect a strong (default) mode of journalism in which transnational relations, strategies, and tactics are reduced to the language of power. This stance on international politics is built on (political) realism and informed by a belief that the world system is ultimately driven by the interests of the strategic calculation of states and nations. Indeed, the sense of realism—not expecting too much from Copenhagen—was manifestly present in journalism before the summit began and gained greater prominence toward the end of it. Several common features in our transnational sample speak to this.

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[9]For instance science was very much up for discussion *before* the summit, due to "Climategate." As a side note: we do indeed believe that science about climate change is convincingly clear.

[10] By calling this a construction, we do not imply that the facts are different. Indeed, if anything, the Copenhagen narrative is "false" because it is based on a decidedly too-optimistic reading of the facts. Indeed, the "bracketing out" of science can be also be related to the need to sustain the plausibility of the political remedying of the problem.

Irrefutable evidence of the global "realist" instinct of journalism is the prominent role of national political actors in the coverage. (Figure 3 provides a country-by-country picture of this; see also Figure 2). The coverage perceived the summit—at least with one eye—as a power play between nation-states where nations were taken as the "natural" units of interest. This illustrates the dependency of the field of climate politics on the field of international politics in general. It highlights the restricted ability of journalism to identify communities of interest not congruent with national borders (such alternative communities would mainly appear through the voice of "civil society" actors, but even there not very prominently).[11] As the visual publicity stunts of Nepal, the Maldives, and later also Mongolia[12] suggest, global power inequalities and victims become most easily visible when they, too, speak in the "language of nations."

The thin role of the transnational political actors confirms the *inter*national "bias" of summit journalism. Figure 3 shows transnational actors gaining relatively more space in emerging and developing countries (and indirectly suggests that realism originates more in the developed countries). This points to transnational actors' tendency to speak with the voice of global emergency and emphasize the call for the developed world to commit to action. Journalism in developing and emerging countries was perhaps more ready to relate to this, since in these countries (because of economic interests, vulnerability, etc.), the transnational actors' positions fit better with their own domestic framing.[13]

The consequences of power realism can also be seen in the marginalization of female voices. No more than 12% of all voices quoted in the coverage were those of women, despite the widespread understanding that women will bear more of the brunt of the consequences of climate change. This implies that the whole field of climate politics, from national political actors to civil-society actors, is male-dominated. Women's voices seem to figure more in feature stories than in other genres, suggesting an ignored potential for women's voices at the grassroots, locally experiencing both climate change and not being taken into account. This also prompts a question about the weakness of the "cosmopolitan" position: despite the clearly identifiable normative vein, journalism seemed unable to balance the habitual gender bias. Whether this signals the link between elite-oriented and/or the normative "cosmopolitan" stance and a universalizing "gender-neutral" ideology is beyond our evidence here—but the question, nevertheless, arises.

A key aspect of realism is the way in which it detaches journalism as an institution from the issues it reports. Thus journalists rarely suggested that the political actors were *right.* The political realism was illustrated in how they recognized that national actors were the most *important* (or indeed accountable to their readership) and thus needed to be followed closely. The representatives of national political systems were the "primary definers" of transnational climate journalism, quite outside of any

[11] Note that at times, voices of transnational entities were heard—for example, the leader of G77 or leaders representing simultaneously both their country and another group, such as EU or BASIC. Also, rhetorically speaking, more than one national leader spoke "on behalf of" larger groups of nations.

[12] Images from a Mongolian government conference appeared in the international press after COP15, displaying them in a desert area of their country.

[13] Numerically they were also fewer than the national ones.

normative "cosmopolitan" considerations of who else *should* be given a voice. The journalistic realism of detachment enabled this attention to be focused on the political play, while more normative positions (of alarm, hope, etc.) were developed elsewhere in the coverage (in victim stories, in reporting on civic activism).

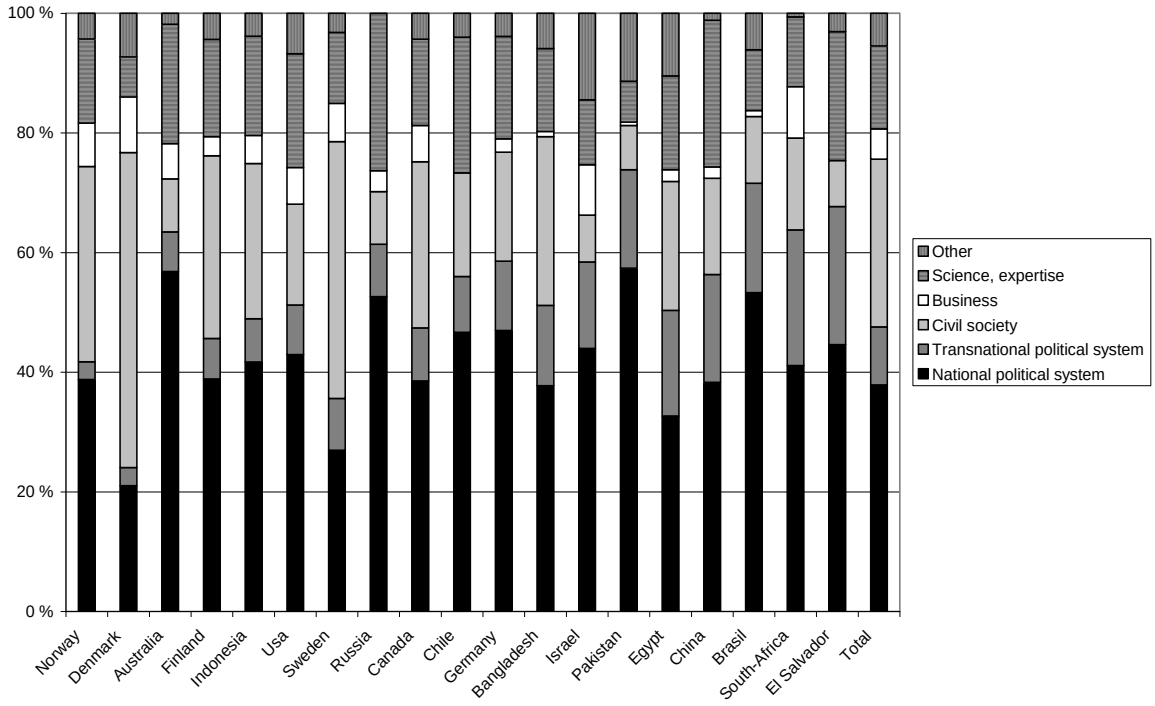

Figure 3. Countries in order of rising share of transnational voices (N=5,522).

As a combination of political (nations rule) and journalistic (detachment) realism, the journalistic field articulated in Copenhagen thus shared professional values while producing—in different corners of the world—opposite views of what was happening or what ought to happen. Realism as a discourse is, after all, based on the idea of conflicting interests (whereas a normative cosmopolitan discourse is based on the work of dialogue and deliberation and ultimately on the possibility of common sense and temporary agreement). As the Copenhagen negotiations became tighter and the deadline for the conference drew closer, the main parties to the disagreement blamed each other. Western leaders tended to blame the emerging powers (China and India, in particular) for not comprehending the urgency of emission cuts. The emerging countries tended to blame "the developed world" for their past and present role in large emissions and their denial of others' progress. The latter included elements of anticolonial rhetoric, linking the climate-change discourses to a wider historical framework. A major newspaper in Indonesia wrote in an editorial, "Meanwhile the developing countries won't be dictated to by developed countries because, in their views, the developed countries that have built industrialization for a long time have to carry a bigger

responsibility" (*Kompas*, December 8, 2009). In Bangladesh, China, and Brazil, similar sentiments on behalf of the "developing nations" were voiced.

Finally, around the formal transnational (journalistic and political) realism, one could also see signs of "thicker" and more climate-specific realism. A concrete indication of this is the way in which many journalists and newspapers around the world tended, as the failure of the summit became increasingly apparent, to turn their criticism toward the Danish conference hosts and the UN process and its leadership. By implication, this criticism was also directed toward the logic of multilateral agreements as a way forward. An example from the editorial of *Dagens Nyheter* from Sweden illustrates how such realism also worked "inside" the normative (hope) discourse, potentially rearticulating and undermining it:

> Fiasco for the UN
>
> The climate meeting in Copenhagen is over. Even the most pessimistic people have reason to be disappointed. A crackdown for the climate. But also for the UN system.
>
> A fiasco. The word cannot be avoided. Not so much because the Copenhagen meeting failed to compose a binding climate agreement. Only the most incurable optimists had expected that. Most people had instead expected a final end document that was watered down and not obligating. But even that was barely achieved. And the reason for this is spelled UN.
>
> . . . . In the UN there is consensus and the principle of one state one voice. This may sound sympathetic but means that one or a couple of small nations can hijack the whole process. To get 193 countries to agree on every single comma appears somewhat utopian. (*Dagens Nyheter*, December 20, 2009)

Even "thicker" versions of climate realism—and agreement on actual *politics*—began to emerge when journalists reported the final outcome of the summit: the "Copenhagen Accord." Perhaps predictably, the media originating in the main states involved in the drafting of that final accord often called the "deal" a success. What connected *The New York Times* and *Xinhua Daily*, then, is not only the way in which they constructed the legitimacy of their own political leaders' actions, but also their implicit belief that the final stretch of Copenhagen—in which realism won over normative cosmopolitanism—meant that global climate politics took a step *forward* (cf. Russell, 2010; Xu, 2010).[14]

Summing up, we can see a clear and in some ways shared mode of "realism" in the transnational field studied here. This position strongly underlined the power realities of the new emerging global (climate) regime in Copenhagen. It was supported by the mainstream (Western and partly globalized)

[14] It should be noted that embracing this realism was by no means uniform across our sample. Generally speaking, in many (or most) countries, the immediate interpretations of the outcome were rather pessimistic.

values and routines of professional journalism, which often resulted in a detached, somewhat cynical, news analysis. In a snapshot of material from the summit, these values and routines can be seen as a "thin" transnational link across the journalistic field. This link does not commit journalists to particular political positions on climate change. This detachment is, of course, the deepest politics of such realism. A realist mode can expose the power game and the calculations that sabotaged the summit, but it is incapable of articulating a call for action from an imagined "global civic society" to the world leaders. It—deliberately and/or not—missed the exceptional global potential of both climate change as an issue and the summit as a political event.

Dynamics of Domestication

Understanding transnational journalism through the prism of field theory means not only looking at what kind of values and value-struggles comprise the field (i.e., what is it that connects and separates journalists "horizontally" from nation to nation). It also means analyzing how these transnationally shared values and tensions influence domestic reporting. What makes the analysis of "transnational fields" interesting is thus the attempt to capture how "global" and "local" dimensions of the field are mutually co-constitutive.

The summits were potential moments in which different national fields of expertise and power were intensively mobilized in a complex transnational setting. At such moments, different actors—politicians, experts, administrators, civic activists, and journalists themselves—were situated *simultaneously* in different fields (global, national, and local). This put additional constraints on routine relationships and opened up new and unconventional resources for actors. For instance, journalists might learn from the performance of their colleagues abroad that domestic civic activists can represent themselves as both domestic (one of the national "us") and, as part of global movements, transnational actors (politicians, scientists, NGOs). This may offer resources and data for scrutinizing domestic experts and politicians, as well as defense and reason for national political agendas. Thus, routines can become exposed (as routines) and disrupted, roles redefined, and relationships momentarily reordered.

During occasions such as summits, the worldwide attention and imagined and real professional (and other) global solidarities and alliances can create new complex field relationships. This suggests a new, contradictory understanding of *domestication* in journalism. On the one hand, domestication can refer to journalism's tendency to highlight a nation's own actors and views in covering a global issue (for instance: exaggeration of one's own country's global impact and importance, or a "what's in it for us" framing of resources for mitigation or adaptation). On the other hand, domestication also appears as a potential moment of national reflexivity or as instances when journalism can be inspired by a transnational environment to critically monitor the (lack of) action from national actors on their "home front." This perspective departs somewhat from earlier views concerning the domestication of foreign news (conceived mainly as a narrow, nationalism-driven journalistic performance [see Curran, 2005; El Refaie, 2003; Lee, Chan, Pan, & So, 2000; Nossek, 2007]). One of the lessons of our study, then, is that transnational field relations open new complexity to the question of journalism and domestication.

A simple quantitative view of domestication in the Copenhagen coverage appears in Figure 4, which shows how much journalism used domestic news actors in different countries.

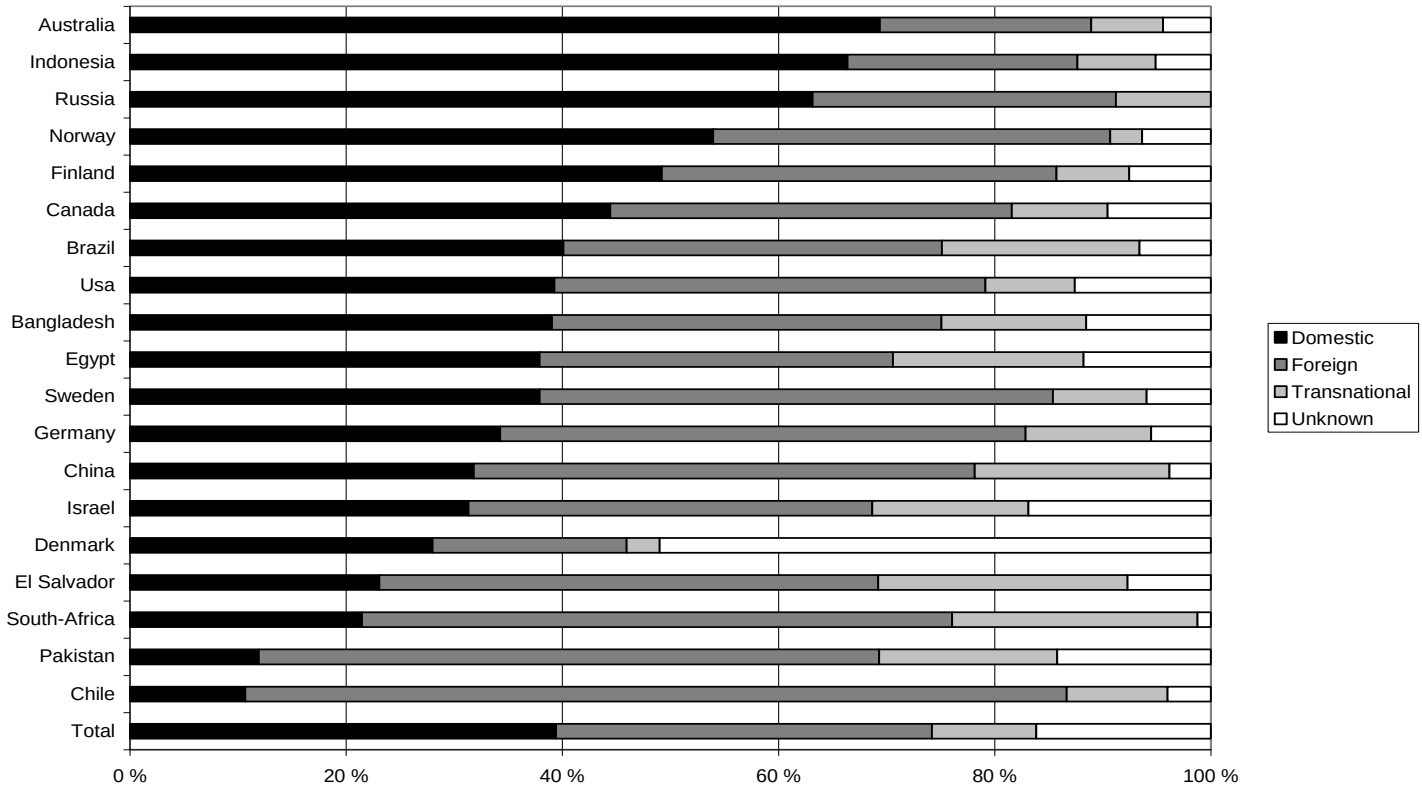

Figure 4. Distribution of domestic, foreign, and transnational voices in the Copenhagen coverage (N=5,522).

Overall the role of domestic actors was fairly important, which suggests that domestic interests constitute an important, if not dominant, part of the interpretation of journalists on climate change. But a high proportion of domestic actors can be due to many things. For instance, in Russia, where amount of coverage was very low (see Table 1), domestic voices speak relatively uniformly, articulating the official state policy (Yagodin, 2010), whereas in Australia, where the volume of coverage was high, domestic voices are many because the issue of climate change is extremely contested in the local political field (Chubb & Bacon, 2010). Clearly, the performance of journalism depends on many general characteristics of field relations: the relationship between media and state power, the relationship between media and the political system, the relationship of media to the market, the professional capital of the individual journalist, and so on. But alongside these fairly stable issues (anchored into the political system, culture, and history of the local context), climate change as a topic complicates relations. Here, we can offer no systematic explanation, but only point out some patterns and local particularities.

One factor that orients journalism in its domestication is the level of climate awareness and the degree of assumed political consensus on the issue. There are a number of countries where public opinion polls tell a story of a gravely concerned public.[15] In such contexts, climate-change policy is an important piece of symbolic capital in the political field—but this capital is not aggressively deployed. When attributed to a nation with no particularly intensive export interest in fossil-fuel industries, such high public concern often leads to a high level of coverage, with national politicians trying to present themselves as being among the concerned global actors who wish to solve the problem (e.g., Sweden, Finland, Germany, Brazil to a degree [see d'Essen, 2010; Hahn & Hermann, 2010; Kumpu & Kunelius, 2010; Roosvall, 2010]). High agenda, high policy awareness, and high public concern thus seem to support journalistic domestication, which follows the summit news with the routine "realistic" frame presented above—that is, dutifully representing "their" politicians' positions. However—at least during the summit—journalism was well capable of positioning itself within the more normative, cosmopolitan global frame.[16]

A more intensive national self-interest in fossil-fuel revenues can complicate this kind of context. Norway provides a good example. There the general contours of coverage are close to the journalism mentioned above. But Norwegians as a nation (and thus their politicians) try to be both at the forefront of solving the problem (as a global, diplomatic force offering rainforest protection funding) and at the same time taking advantage of its fossil resources (or can actually be said to offer the rainforest billions precisely due to its oil revenue). This contradiction clearly offers journalists opportunities to distance themselves from politicians and points to a more critical, reflexive domestication (Eide & Ytterstad, 2010, 2011).

Countries that are more vulnerable to the predicted consequences of climate change constitute another complex case. There is no necessary connection between vulnerability and high coverage, and other factors are at play, with political control of the media and the level of public opinion awareness among the most obvious. For instance, in (pre-2011) Egypt, a general sense of vulnerability did support limited elite-press discourse in which Egypt was seen as taking part in the global negotiations. But there was little reflection on the performance of the government measured against the global political aims. The volume of coverage also remained low, most likely due to overriding domestic discourse on the rising level of poverty and political discontent (Saleh, 2010). In Bangladesh, a high identification with being the future victim of climate change and a weak position at the global negotiation tables produced highly binary frames oscillating between hope and despair. Bangladesh came to be seen partly as a metaphor for the

[15] Although in many such countries, even before Copenhagen (partly because of the global recession, no doubt) public concern about global warming was in decline, and this tendency has continued after the summit.

[16] In such countries, the "global" discourse appears as an important context of domestication, and various local actors tried to become part of this story during Copenhagen. One could, perhaps, also suggest that in such countries, civil-society actors are prominently presented in Copenhagen. Civil-society actors, are, for instance very prominent in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, where these actors probably also serve a symbolic function for journalism to keep up the distinction between journalism and politicians.

gloomy future of the world ("Climate Change Spells Doom for Bangladesh," *Daily Star,* December 12, 2009; see also Rhaman, 2010). What connects this sense of domestication to the Norwegian case is the way in which journalism articulates—to its domestic audiences—what the nation ("we") looks like from a transnational perspective. National politicians obviously play a big part here. Thus, while the Indonesian press could in some ways have drawn on the same resources of becoming a frontline victim, it dwelt much less on this self-acclaimed victim frame, focusing more on the consequences of the international bargaining to the country itself. South Africa was also an interesting case: while clearly taking some pride in the fact that it was invited to be part of the final bargaining in Copenhagen (Accord), its press also critically asked (given the fact that Africa is among the more vulnerable parts of the world) whether its leaders had paid too high a price for this entry into the inner circles of global climate power ("Were we so thrilled to be included that we went along with a bad deal?" *Business Day,* December 21, 2009; see also Orgeret, 2010).

Particular versions of domestication appeared in countries where for one reason or another, climate change has become politically a highly contested domestic issue. In Australia, the Copenhagen summit was narrated mostly through an intensive domestic power struggle that eventually led to the resignation of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Through this dominance of the political field (and the ownership structure of the media) over the journalistic, climate "deniers" seemed to have somewhat more space in the Australian coverage. This happened even though journalists generally accepted the scientific evidence and despite the overwhelming and concerned public opinion (Bacon & Chubb, 2010). In Canada, the issue was politicized in another way. Regional political actors there visibly took part in the Copenhagen summit, questioning the official government policy. By appearing openly at the summit as critics of their own nation's policies, they provided yet another constellation in which journalists could critically domesticate the summit (Tegelberg, 2010). In Brazil, the approaching presidential elections partly made the Copenhagen summit into a preelection event through the presence of three prominent presidential candidates (d' Essen, 2010).

Countries with less "autonomous" journalistic fields provide still different contexts for domestication. In Russia, the press coverage of Copenhagen was more intensive than that of Bali, but still very low compared with other countries. This coincides with the low level of environmental discussion in the mainstream media in general and the relatively low public concern about climate change. It also suggests a kind of "clientelist" domestication where the political field extends its dominance to the journalistic field, but also to other fields (at least in their mediated form)—and particularly science. The relatively high proportion of scientific voices in the Russian coverage was often used to provide legitimacy for the government policy in Copenhagen, which, in turn, was run by fairly open economic calculation of national interests (Yagodin, 2010). Unlike in Russia, in China since 2007, environmental issues have been high on the official political agenda, which led to a relatively high level of coverage from both the Bali and Copenhagen summits. In China, too, the role of scientists in the media was relatively strong (as proved by a high proportion of science voices in the summit coverage), but science—as also in Russia—was not a resource for challenging the official policy of the country. In Chinese media, China's role in Copenhagen was mainly seen as being correct. But the high attention to climate politics and to China's international role also raised the stakes in domestic public discourse in China (Xu, 2010). While the Chinese media and politics tried during Bali to represent China as part of the developing world (and thus, not part of the

cause of the problem), at Copenhagen, China's central role at least implied in the domestic media publicity that it carries more responsibility. Becoming a major visible player at the negotiation table did not, however, lead to critically reflective domestication (which would require semiautonomous national fields of science and journalism). The coverage was rather a mix of self-celebration and a highlighting of China's role as a global leader—in particular providing guidance and leadership for the developing countries.

These remarks are clearly not enough to build a general explanation of journalistic domestication. But what they do show, we believe, is that in such transnationally charged moments as the climate summits, journalistic domestication is a complex and potentially reflexive practice. This is how a Canadian newspaper talked to its Canadian readers about Canadian policy:

> Canada enters the climate talks as a global laggard. With the oil sands and Ottawa's response to Kyoto under heavy scrutiny, the country's reputation is on the line. The country "is the dirty old man of the climate world," according to a recent *Guardian* article. Another prominent article published ahead of the Copenhagen climate summit called it a "corrupt petro-state" . . . China? Venezuela or an oil stained African state? Try Canada. (*Globe and Mail*, December 7, 2009)

Conclusion

Climate change in general and the COP summits in particular provide a unique opportunity to empirically study the dynamics of transnational journalism. In this article, we identified some general features of global newspaper coverage that point to transnationally shared positions and values among journalists. Such empirical findings enable us to begin to theorize the ways in which a transnational journalistic field in general can exist and to suggest some positions and values in this field. There clearly was—and perhaps still is—a potential overlap between progressive concern for global climate policy and an advocacy/watchdog current within the journalistic field. At the same time, there was a strong sense of political realism that reflected the overlap of journalism with the field of politics and power. The latter link reminds us that because the transnational political field articulated by the COP process remains very much under the hegemony of the strong nations and the politics of country blocs (and transnational political actors are weaker), so also does transnational journalism.

We have identified two poles or positions in global climate journalism: the advocacy of hope and the mode of realism. Theoretically, if we consider "fields" to be characterized by the kinds of capital that cannot be reduced to their conditions (or neighboring fields), our materials suggest that the normative cosmopolitan position at least somehow momentarily empowered those with fewer other power resources (the NGOs or the victim nations, for instance). Somewhat conversely, the realist mode made no such effort. Hence, one can argue that the normative cosmopolitan position to some extent reflects the "autonomous" pole of transnational climate journalism and the realist the "heteronomous" one.

Despite the fact that global attention to climate change has declined considerably since Copenhagen, it is obviously the major global challenge of the 21st century. For scholars of communication

and journalism, this poses a question of how to make sense of the complex ways in which climate discourses circulate, are framed, and are reframed. In such an analysis, it is crucial to be able to identify the moments and mechanisms through which actors involved in climate politics can construct the urgently needed global dialogue that the issue demands. For journalism, our findings offer both signs of hope and sobering reminders of realism. New kinds of communication networks and alliances of actors can indeed help new kinds of journalism to emerge and empower people transnationally. But the structural links of journalism and dependency on powerful actors and power hierarchies shines through as well. It is crucial that we continue to theorize the complexity of the moments of transnational journalism. It helps us to identify—and possibly also to defend—the fragile autonomy of journalism in a globalizing world.

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